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## THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS IN THE ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES

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The theme dealt with in this sketch is veritably an inspiring one. Much more has been achieved in the domain of the history of religions under Italian auspices, and achieved in a modest yet frankly aggressive spirit, than the majority of English-speaking scholars are wont to believe.

Recall what has happened during the last fifty years. One can discern without difficulty two well-defined movements, separated by a brief but significant interregnum. In truth, these movements are one. At the end of an intervening period of derangement forces which had existed for a time in a condition of unstable equilibrium suddenly gather strength and press forward (united and persistent) with an energy and dash which are positively exhilarating.

1. *The period lying between 1873 and 1910.*—The year 1873 will always be memorable in the academic annals of Italy. In that year Parliament put into force an act whereby the theological faculties of all the universities of the kingdom were summarily abolished.<sup>1</sup> The history of religions suffered no loss in consequence of this step, seeing that in Italy the scientific study of the faiths of mankind had not yet been begun. Up to that date very little investigation of this sort had been attempted in any of the countries of Europe. Professor Friedrich Max Müller, it is true, had just published a useful little book containing a course of four lectures which he had delivered three years earlier at the Royal Institution in London, and which he tells us were “intended as an introduction to a comparative study of the principal religions of the world.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Atti del Parlamento* (April, 1872) and *Atti del Senato* (January, 1873).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (London, 1873), p. vii.

For a considerable period this courageous pioneer had slowly been feeling his way through researches in philology and mythology into a more intimate acquaintance with man's worship of multifarious deities. Already he had begun to publish a collection of essays, destined speedily to gain a wide and cordial welcome.<sup>1</sup> But his *Introduction* brought British and Continental thinking to a sudden halt, and then gave it a new impulse and bent. Many statements in this volume seem now to be vague, confusing, and immature. Nevertheless, it proved an epoch-making book, not so much on account of its actual contents as because it opened a door into a great field in which many inquirers have been busy ever since.

Italy however remained practically untouched; or, as some may prefer to describe it, Italian scholarship remained sound and unscathed. In 1870 the country was successfully unified under Vittorio Emanuele II. Three years later, as already stated, the theological faculties disappeared. But the statute which dissolved them decreed that the chairs it had emptied were not to be abolished along with the faculties to which they had belonged; they were in each instance to be transferred to the "facultà di filosofia e lettere." It seemed possible, accordingly, that this decision, if Italy so desired it, might be utilized with excellent results in the interests of the history of religions. This opportunity was brought all the closer, and indeed was immensely strengthened, by sundry frank declarations made by influential members of Parliament. These deputies expressly maintained that the history of religions (in addition to the philosophy of religion, the history of Christianity, etc.) must in the future be assigned a place in the official courses of study provided by the universities.

The action taken by the Italian Parliament was faulty in two particulars. First, it deliberately allowed a body of teachers, indispensable to every thoroughly equipped university staff, to pass out of existence. Few will contend that any mistake was made in abolishing the theological faculties *as they were then constituted*. All who held chairs in them were priests, instructors who derived their authority to teach (ultimately) from the Vatican. In a word,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Chips from a German Workshop* (London, 1867-75), 4 vols.

the theological faculties of the Italian universities, prior to 1873, were simply Roman Catholic seminaries of a high grade, maintained at the public expense. Now, however much local religious communities may value the establishment and perpetuation of such schools, the state is under no obligation to facilitate theological teaching which is imparted in purely denominational institutions. No modern government is prepared to make itself responsible for any system of beliefs which a large proportion—and, quite possibly, the majority—of its supporters find themselves unable to accept and indorse. Those who wish to see such seminaries in active operation must themselves undertake to meet the outlay involved. Strictly speaking, the “faculties” intrusted with the teaching of theology in Italy were not really university faculties at all. What the government ought to have done was to have reconstructed thoroughly the existing machinery of theological education, thereby securing the preservation of the old faculties, endowing them with a higher prestige and widened capabilities, and encouraging them to apply (wherever possible) the methods of scientific research to a study which every academic corporation should accord the place of highest honor.

The other mistake which the Italian Parliament made lay in its handing over the teaching of this complex subject to a faculty constituted for an entirely different purpose, and one which was already overweighted by its supervision of a group of exacting studies. It was a good thing, to be sure, that the proposed courses of instruction in the history of religions were not committed to the oversight of the existing theological faculties. The Church of Rome, the oldest and the most uncompromising authority in Italy, has never shown itself friendly toward this special branch of inquiry. Individual members of that communion, and several groups of scholarly investigators which it has furnished, have honestly sought to further and defend the growing demands of this study. Nay, more; upon occasion, selected representatives of that church, officially designated and approved, have announced that they have taken this department under their care, and have then defined with much exactitude its range and its limitations. But the weight of influence, in the highest quarters, has invariably tended

to obstruct rather than to promote the progress of this particular kind of research. Whenever the Church of Rome has ostensibly lent it countenance and patronage, this course has seemingly been adopted, not so much because it has sought to widen contemporary knowledge as with a view of keeping the immediate situation under control. Dogmatic ends may be served through the medium of this study; it is not therefore to be abandoned to those who might make an inconvenient use of it. Ultimately considered—to state the case in the baldest and most general terms—there exists for the Church of Rome, in effect, only *one* religion; and of Roman Christianity that church is the *sole* authoritative interpreter. The history of religions, in so circumscribed and restraining an atmosphere, could not have survived very long. Moreover, the Church of Rome continues to be needlessly uneasy whenever laymen invade any theological domain. Theological preserves have long been jealously restricted to the activities of the clergy; the Italian government, on the other hand, was resolute in its determination to remove the teaching of theology beyond the reach of that clerical supervision by which it had previously been regulated.

A wiser course was followed in France when the faculties of theology were allowed to disappear in that country. In both cases reform and readjustment rather than complete abolition would best have met the needs of the occasion. France did not abruptly end these faculties, though unfortunately she did permit them to drift away from her universities and to become “*établissements extérieurs*.” Thus we have now the “*faculté libre de théologie de l’institut catholique de Paris*,” the “*faculté libre de théologie protestante de Paris*,” the “*faculté libre de théologie protestante de Montauban*,” the “*faculté libre de théologie catholique de Lille*,” etc. But if France consented to surrender a part of her full university equipment, she did not stop at that point. The teaching of the history of religions was not handed over to her “*facultés des lettres*,” nor yet allowed to become the monopoly of purely denominational colleges; on the contrary, it was intrusted to a large special staff of highly trained instructors—some of whom had formerly been “*in orders*”—who constituted the “*section des sciences religieuses*” of the famous *École des Hautes-Études* of

Paris. There the methods of historical and comparative research were applied (and are still being applied) with the necessary skill and without interference from any external authority operating in influential quarters. As the result has demonstrated, such studies, however penetrative their investigation into sources, traditions, contemporary authorities, etc., can not only be conducted without loss of reverence for really authentic religious beliefs, but with the positive advantage of placing these beliefs upon verifiable and satisfying foundations.

The new act "per la soppressione della facoltà di teologia nelle Università del Regno" was eventually passed. It was framed in an atmosphere of keen and often very embittered controversy. If it contains occasional vagueness and vacillation of statement, that fact is traceable to its endeavor to reconcile numerous political and ecclesiastical disagreements. The church, as was natural, was openly antagonistic; it has never disguised its hostility toward the practical working of this act. The government, however, exhibiting a commendable energy, brought the law into immediate operation. It will be interesting briefly to recall the names of the professors who were intrusted with the responsibility of incorporating the history of religions in the curricula of the Italian universities, the ways in which their undertaking was temporarily thwarted, and the gratifying measure of success which at last begins to crown their efforts.

Under the terms of the law of 1873, Professor Filippo Abignente was invited to occupy the chair allotted to "storia della chiesa" in the University of Naples. This nomination was made while Parliament was still in session, and thus Professor Abignente holds the premier place in the slowly lengthening line of a courageous and honorable succession. It will be noted that the government in naming Christianity as the first religion whose history was to be studied under the new conditions showed honor to the faith which was supremely revered in Italy. At the same time, this action undoubtedly implied a challenge which was viewed by the church with no very kindly feelings.

The first selection of a professor to fill one of the newly established group of university chairs involved no change of post

for Professor Abignente, seeing that, as it happened, the chair of church history had already been incorporated in the "facultà di filosofia e lettere" at Naples, and the professor was the occupant of that chair. The real significance of the situation lay in two facts. First, a revised scheme of university instruction having been decreed, and the government acting without delay, Naples was the first city in which the new law went into operation in Italy, and Professor Abignente was the first to respond to a not unwelcome summons. Secondly, inasmuch as this professor, in his place in Parliament, had shown great enthusiasm when advocating the proposal that the history of religions should be introduced into the curricula of the Italian universities—it being one of the subjects which, in his opinion, the government might usefully substitute for the dogmatic teaching which was then imparted in all the theological faculties—it was confidently expected that an entirely new régime was about to be inaugurated at the chief seats of learning throughout a unified Italy.

This forecast would probably have proved correct had circumstances not been so adverse. If temporary failure ensued, at least part of the blame must be laid at Professor Abignente's own door. Formerly a priest, he had ultimately attained the rank of canon. But the abandonment of his clerical calling, followed by his election to Parliament in 1860 and his appointment in the following year to the chair of church history in Naples, had been succeeded by evidences of extreme theological liberalism. The Church of Rome is too much given to affixing the label "rationalist" to men who call in question her alleged infallible authority in matters of faith; but some justification for this action was certainly furnished by the aberrations of the university teacher whose lectures are now under discussion. No doubt Professor Abignente's thinking suffered the effects of a serious reaction from earlier restraints and an overstrict religious upbringing. He became besides, in later life, an admirer of David Friedrich Strauss, and his intellectual attitude tended to assume a much too generous coloring from that quarter. Yet further, his teaching under his second appointment was never sufficiently concentrated and intensive; it is not surprising, therefore, that it often failed to be

satisfying. It did not possess—at least it did not exhibit—the skill and confidence of a master; probably it was as well that it covered only a period of about three years. The lectures offered were too negative, and they were often very radical in tone; students expected, and they certainly had a right to demand, guidance of a stronger and more competent character. As regards the non-Christian religions, Professor Abignente, although possessing no mandate to pursue this course, soon made it plain that these alien faiths were to be given no subordinate place. Accordingly, he expounded them with diligence and considerable ingenuity. Perhaps it is not too much to say that he bestowed more time and pains upon the interpretation of the tenets of Buddhism, Egyptian religion, Chinese religion, Mithraism, Parsism, etc., than he was accustomed to allot to the exposition of the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity.

The second selection made under the law of 1873 occurred when Professor Raffaele Mariano was invited to fill the chair which Professor Abignente vacated in 1876. This invitation, be it remarked, was postponed until 1885; the former holder of this post was still living, but nine years were allowed to elapse before the government took fresh action. Difficulties not wholly unexpected barred the way against a more rapid procedure. Renewed opposition on the part of the church and a feeling of disappointment (alike within Parliament and beyond it) among the friends of the new law put effectual brakes on the wheels of progress. But Dr. Mariano, upon assuming his official duties, showed himself to be a man of resource and energy. At the outset, at any rate, he entertained sanguine expectations concerning the success of a somewhat doubtful experiment. He was a student of wide learning, of a distinctly philosophic turn, and deeply read in law as well as in history and theology. He was aware that, for many years to come, the scientific study of religion in Italy would have to meet experiences inseparable from a difficult and checkered career. Yet he refused to be discouraged. With untiring voice and pen he sought to gird up the minds both of himself and others. Finally, however, in 1904, he insisted upon relinquishing his chair. For eight additional years he lived in retirement, busy among his books,



engaged chiefly in revising and issuing a definitive edition of his numerous publications.<sup>1</sup> Those who knew him intimately had often an opportunity of discussing with him the prospects of his exacting yet favorite study; and none could fail to mark how deep was his regret that many of his earlier hopes had withered and then utterly perished. "The conditions are too unfriendly," he frequently used to say. Or, again, "Italy must be content to wait; my vision of a great and welcome *sorgimento* has not yet been fulfilled." If this pioneer had only lived until today he would have rejoiced to find that many of his dreams have been realized.

In the year in which Professor Mariano delivered his inaugural lecture in Naples,<sup>2</sup> the University of Rome resolutely pressed *its* claim to enter this controversial arena. The advisability or inadvisability of such action had been discussed again and again, but a hue and cry of irreconcilable opposition had invariably arisen. Why was this chair to be created? it was asked in unmistakably resentful tones. Although Parliament had made express provision for it, it was alleged to be a post that was quite needless. Few desired to see the chair established; and even if it were set up there was no one within reach (so it was declared) who was reasonably competent to fill it.

The debate finally ended in Professor Baldassare Labanca being selected, and this call was with some hesitance accepted. The inaugurator of this unpromising undertaking was already "professore ordinario" of moral philosophy in the University of Pisa, and he continued to hold that chair for some time after he came to the capital. Why? Because, in view of the situation just described, it was not a full professorship that the University of Rome had originally to offer; in effect, it was merely a lectureship. It was not until seven years later, viz., in 1893, that a professorship was securely established. When Professor Labanca accepted the appointment to act as "incaricato per la storia del Cristianesimo nell' Università di Roma,"<sup>3</sup> he had no thought of doing more than helping to give the experiment a good start. He proposed to return

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Scritti varii* (Florence, 1900-1911), 12 vols.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Lo stato e l'insegnamento della religione* (Naples, 1886).

<sup>3</sup> That is, a professor officially "placed in charge" of a particular subject.

before long to Pisa, where he was happy in his work. But, as he once expressed himself when recalling this incident in his career, he had put his hand to the plow and he refused to turn back; “la imperiosa necessità moderna degli studi religiosi imponeva al governo ed al professore di perseverare nell’ opera intrapresa.”

Professor Labanca was the first university teacher in Italy who was appointed to give instruction in “*storia delle religioni*.” This fact marks a significant advance. However, less than three years later the professor himself approached the ministry of public instruction with a request that the title of the chair be changed to “*storia del Cristianesimo*.” This petition was acceded to; and, although onlookers still recall that concession with regret, the explanation of it is not far to seek. There was not the least desire on Professor Labanca’s part to shirk any portion of his duty; on the contrary, his extreme conscientiousness—his resolve to perform his task in a thoroughgoing and competent manner—constrained him to secure the narrowing of his original commission. He was already well advanced in life; he was too old, indeed, to initiate researches in a very wide and perplexing field of inquiry. Besides, in earlier years, he had been received into the priesthood; and, intimately acquainted with the tenets and excellences of the Christian faith, he preferred to conduct his little band of students along ancient and familiar pathways. His reverence for Christianity and his conviction that it would ultimately win the universal acknowledgment of its unrivaled superiority never faltered or became dim; nevertheless, he was insistent that the narrow and dogmatic teaching of the church on this subject was not only unwarranted, but that it involved the throwing away of an immensely valuable apologetic opportunity. There were religions other than Christianity in active operation; and these faiths, sincerely and legitimately obeyed by millions of mankind, the Christian had never sufficiently esteemed. Hence, in his inaugural lecture he declared that “to inquire into, and to ascertain with impartiality, all religious facts pertaining to various peoples—ancient and modern, savage and civilized—is to pursue the only method whereby the history of religions can be dealt with aright in our universities. It is a problem needing solution; and it can

be solved only through the medium of profound research and persistent investigation."<sup>1</sup> And again: "Critical as opposed to dogmatic [study] . . . is practically neutral ground, a region where the facts of religion are permitted to live and move free of constraint from without."<sup>2</sup> Professor Labanca went farther; for he declared emphatically that it was only through the employment of the comparative method that the real significance of Christianity, standing in the forefront of the other religions of the world, could ever be made indubitably clear.

An impression which at first widely prevailed, viz., that other universities besides those of Naples and Rome would quickly avail themselves of the provisions embodied in the law of 1873, proved to be unfounded. The hindrances which were devised with the purpose of rendering any such action abortive proved only too successful. The antagonism of the church, the jealousy and strife of political factions, and (especially) the lack of sufficient appreciation of the high value of the projected new chairs resulted in a most disappointing stay of proceedings. In truth, no further step in advance, in so far at least as the universities were concerned, falls to be chronicled within the next succeeding quarter of a century. The modernist movement, always a friend and advocate of the scientific study of religion, developed indeed unexpected resources of strength, and presently a very able modernist *Review* was successfully launched.<sup>3</sup> But this fact only incensed the church anew and made the outlook of the history of religions more precarious than ever. The year 1910 was one in which the promoters of this study in Italy felt extremely downhearted. It was the darkest hour of all. But it was also the hour that heralded the dawn.

2. *The period between 1910 and 1918.*—Professor Mariano died in December, 1912; and a few weeks later Professor Labanca (still in harness but visibly failing in strength) fell ill and passed away. Dr. Mariano's chair had already been vacant for over eight years,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *La religione per le università è un problema, non un assioma* (Turin, 1886), pp. 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Il Rinascimento* (Milan, 1907-9). [*Vide infra.*]

and the post vacated by Professor Labanca's death was destined to remain in abeyance for two additional years. Thus, during a considerable interval, the law of 1873 ceased practically to be in effect; in all Italy, for the time being, there existed not a single university chair offering instruction in the history of religions. Attention was repeatedly called to this fact, and the friends of a study which was most seriously being neglected loyally reasserted its claims. But old antagonisms and suspicions, quickly revived, successfully barred the way. Then the present war, with all its anxieties and sufferings, was suddenly launched upon Europe. In the circumstances, a further pause seemed inevitable. Nevertheless, as events have proved, the seed so diligently sown was not really dead. On the contrary, it had secretly taken root; and a rich harvest, apparently, is now about to be reaped. The optimism and the splendid energy which are manifest today on every hand are abundantly warranted. The promoters of the scientific study of religion in the universities are more than ever confident; this time they will surely win. The results thus far achieved will be chronicled in the remainder of this paper.

Let us begin with the University of Rome. In March, 1913, Dr. Raffaele Pettazzoni was appointed lecturer ("libero docente") in "storia delle religioni." This post revived responsibility for the task which had originally been committed to Professor Labanca, twenty-seven years earlier; but it will be remarked that the undertaking was now intrusted to one of the junior teachers in the university. This step did not betoken a reduced estimate of the importance of the history of religions; it signified rather the conviction that the only prospect of dealing adequately with this subject lay in the selection of a scholar of moderate age, whose comparatively recent training would enable him to stand closely *en rapport* with the situation, and whose subsequent studies might be expected steadily to advance the widening interests of his department. Exactly two years later (in March, 1915), Dr. Ernesto Buonaiuti was selected as Professor Labanca's successor, his researches to be devoted mainly to an exposition of "storia del Cristianesimo." In the autumn of that year, the new professor delivered his inaugural lecture, in which he surveyed in a vivid and

most effective way a theme of undying fascination.<sup>1</sup> The university may well be congratulated upon its having secured a very promising addition to its staff, seeing that Professor Buonaiuti is a writer who is winning for himself a steadily growing circle of readers.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it can confidently be affirmed that the range of his lectures, as it was true of the lectures of the late Professor Labanca, will not be confined within too rigidly circumscribed limits. And finally, inasmuch as Dr. Pettazzoni, successfully coaxed away by the University of Bologna, has found a worthy successor in Dr. Nicola Turchi, the interests of "storia delle religioni" are in no danger of being neglected. Dr. Turchi enjoys the honor of being the author of the first competent textbook on this subject which Italy has given to the world.<sup>3</sup> During the winter session of 1916-17, he delivered a course of lectures dealing with "religioni dei Romani"; during the following session, he discussed "Le religioni misteriosofiche." He has also been very active in helping forward those arresting literary enterprises which have characterized the recent history of the university and to which express reference is made on a subsequent page. Altogether, when one takes a conjunct view of the situation, the University of Rome now occupies the premier place in Italy among the promoters of special research in the history of religions.

Turning next to Naples, the chair formerly held in that university by Professor Mariano has at last been filled. The post has been awarded, and very wisely so, to Dr. Luigi Salvatorelli, an accomplished scholar and a tireless investigator. His books are well known far beyond Italy, for he wields the pen of a ready and attractive writer. He has proved a welcome visitor at numerous theological and philosophical congresses, at which he has read papers of conspicuous merit. In particular, he has prepared the initial volume of a library known as "Collezione di scienza delle religioni," thereby rendering students in this field an appreciable

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Il cristianesimo nell' Africa Romana* (Rome, 1915).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Lo gnosticismo. Storia di antiche lotte religiose* (Rome, 1907); *Il cristianesimo primitivo e la politica imperiale romana* (Rome, 1913); *Il cristianesimo medioevale* (Città di Castello, 1914); *La prima coppia umana nel sistema manichaeo* (Rome, 1917); *Santi' Agostino* (Rome, 1917), etc.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Manuale di storia delle religioni* (Turin, 1912).

and very timely service.<sup>1</sup> He is not likely to commence his lecture courses until after the end of the war; but he is quite certain to cast his net, eventually, much wider than an exposition exclusively of "storia della chiesa."

In the University of Bologna, likewise, the new spirit of the times is already finding expression. After considerable discussion, a chair allotted to "storia delle religioni" was established in October, 1914, and Dr. Pettazzoni of Rome was invited to fill it. The occupant of this post has not yet acquired the status of a "professore ordinario." It should be remarked, however, that he enters upon his work holding the grade of a teacher who ranks considerably in advance of a "libero docente"; he is to serve, meanwhile, in a "professore incaricato" capacity. Attention need hardly be called to the zeal and success with which Professor Pettazzoni has already applied his hand to investigations which are henceforth to secure the full concentration of his powers.<sup>2</sup>

But, apart from what the Italian government is effecting through its Università Regie, note must also be taken of what has recently been accomplished by two of its best-known Istituti Universitari. At the Royal Academy (R. Accademia Scientifico-Letteraria) of Milan, Dr. Uberto Pestalozza has been invited to deliver in the future regular courses of lectures on "storia delle religioni." This departure was first made in 1912, and it has been rewarded from the outset by evidences which demonstrate its success. In like manner, at the Royal Institution of Advanced Studies in Florence, Dr. Umberto Fracassini was appointed instructor in "storia del Cristianesimo" in 1915. Thus far he has had to postpone arranging a definite program of lectures; but he expects to undertake full duty within the current year.

Recent progress in the scientific study of religion in the Italian universities can claim to be credited with still additional achievements. The world stands indebted in no small degree to various professors and lecturers who, at work in kindred fields of research,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Introduzione bibliografica alla scienza delle religioni* (Rome, 1914).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *La religione primitiva in Sardegna* (Piacenza, 1912); *La scienza delle religioni e il suo metodo* (Bologna, 1913); *La storia del cristianesimo e la storia delle religioni* (Bologna, 1914), etc.

have lent opportune and most welcome assistance. In the University of Rome, for instance, who can fail to be grateful for the help so often furnished in the interpretation of Confucianism, Taoism, etc., by Dr. Giovanni Vacca, who in 1912 was appointed to the chair of Chinese language and literature; in the interpretation of Indian religions by Dr. Carlo Formichi, professor of Sanskrit, who has held his present post since 1913; and by several others of equal ardor—for example, Professor Rodolfo Lanciani—who have long been connected with this metropolitan center of learning. In the University of Naples, one cannot overlook the fruitful labors of Professor Alessandro Chiappelli and Professor Giuseppe de Lorenzo. In the Royal Institution of Florence, Dr. Carlo Puini (professor of oriental history) and Dr. Paolo E. Pavolini (professor of Sanskrit) continue to be loyal and capable co-workers with other international scholars in this field. It is in Florence, too, where Dr. Giulio Farina resides, the Egyptologist whose successful researches and whose connection with the Museo Egizio of that city have made him so widely known. Among the most active promoters of the new *Rivista di Scienza delle Religioni*, to which reference is made below, no one sought more diligently to insure its complete success than Dr. Farina. And then one remembers Dr. Leone Caetani (Principe Leone di Teono),<sup>1</sup> and all that he has accomplished in the interests of our closer acquaintance with Mohammedan scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Inasmuch as Italy is becoming more and more the protector of very numerous Moslem subjects, it needs no gift of prophecy to foresee the importance (for other lands not less than for Italy itself) of a thorough familiarity with this extensive domain. Indeed, if one were to specify in detail all the tributaries which now feed the waters of an ever-deepening stream, the record of the recent advances which the study of the history of religions has made in Italy would far exceed the limits prescribed for the present passing survey.

Take, for instance, the contributions successively rendered available in the proceedings of the various congresses, learned

<sup>1</sup> Now become the Duca di Sermoneta.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Annali dell' Islam* (Milan, 1905—), in progress; *Studi di storia orientale* (Milan, 1911—), in progress; *Cronografia islamica* (Paris, 1913—), in progress; etc.

societies, etc., which have met in Italy within the last five years. Quite apart from the assistance lent of late by its universities and other centers of learning, a marked feature of recent research in Italy has been the frequency with which scholars in all domains of inquiry have turned aside to investigate questions raised by the historical and critical study of religion. If one consult the series of volumes published by the International Congress of Historical Studies, he will find that, at the meeting held in Rome,<sup>1</sup> a considerable amount of time was allotted in section vii to the consideration of papers on "storia delle religioni." Again, the Circolo di Filosofia, when it met in Rome in the spring of 1913, inaugurated a scheme under which lectures on "storia delle religioni" are now systematically offered. The professors of the university lent their willing assistance, and the success of the undertaking became almost immediately assured. To cite but one more instance, at the meeting of the Italian Society for the Advancement of Science, called together in Siena in September of the same year, a new section—now devoting itself annually to the exposition of this subject—was enthusiastically and firmly established.

It must not be overlooked, yet further, that the publishers of Italy are contributing their full share toward strengthening this new crusade. No small apportionment of praise is due to leaders who, in spite of large financial risks, have shown themselves willing to face this responsibility. Within the last three years several "libraries" dealing with the science of religion have been projected, and at least one of these collections has already been begun. This *Biblioteca*, published by Signor Guglielmo Quadrotta, now serving at the front as an officer in the Italian army, has been designated *Collezione di Scienza delle Religioni*. The series when complete will present a very comprehensive survey of the field which it proposes to cover, the history, comparison, and philosophy of religion being dealt with in a really adequate manner. The first volume, as above stated, has been issued. As soon as the present war ends, this important project will be carried forward with energy and expedition.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Atti del congresso internazionale di scienze storiche*, 1903 (Rome, 1904).



Another undertaking, of a similar though less inclusive character, has been announced by Messrs. V. Bartelli e C<sup>o</sup>, a firm of publishers in Perugia. This enterprise, which is to be conducted under the supervision of Professor Bernardino Varisco of Rome, stands suspended until peace has been re-established in Europe. Popular rather than critical in its aim, this library should meet a real need in the contemporary literature of Italy.

There must be mentioned also the *Biblioteca di Studi Religiosi*, edited by the professors of an important Baptist theological school, the Scuola Teologica Battista di Roma. Begun in 1912, this series of publications is growing rapidly and is discharging a very competent service. As might be anticipated, these treatises (thus far) have been more apologetic than constructive. It will become clear, presently, whether these volumes are to assume a more aggressive and comprehensive rôle.

This sketch would be signally defective, especially as regards the growing use now being made of the press, if no reference were made to the recent founding of one or two critical Reviews. To this subject only one or two paragraphs can be devoted in this survey. Out of the many journals which Italy so industriously produces—often only to discard them before they have had time properly to effect their purpose—three at least must be given a place in this record. In no country in Europe is the life of a Review so precarious as when it happens to be born within the Italian kingdom. Influences of a very subtle and mischievous character frequently emerge, sometimes with startling suddenness; and in this way the labor of years may be ruthlessly and utterly sacrificed. Readers of a certain highly valued publication which, notwithstanding all obstacles, managed to hold on its way for a considerable period,<sup>1</sup> were filled with genuine regret when it ceased to make its appearance; but they were prepared from the outset to face this probable issue. The Review had not been in existence a twelvemonth before difficulties began to accumulate. It was no doubt true that "the tardy development of the critical study of religion" proved increasingly disappointing to its editors; but all are aware that that explanation accounted only to a very limited

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Il Rinascimento* (Milan, 1907-9). 6 vols.

extent for its lamentable disappearance. It had secured a large circulation among Roman Catholic laymen, and its modernistic teaching was held in certain quarters to be disturbing.

At the commencement of last year a group of Italian scholars, including Professors Buonaiuti, Fracassini, Pestalozza, Pettazzoni, Salvatorelli, Dr. Farina, and Dr. Turchi, had the courage to launch a new scientific journal of a very high order.<sup>1</sup> Its projectors proposed to devote this Review to the promotion exclusively of the critical study of religion. It was the earliest publication of its type which Italy had ever known. France will always enjoy the distinction of having founded the journal which first ventured to enter this field, a journal which, from its very commencement, has been a credit to the country which stands sponsor for it.<sup>2</sup> Germany came second, providing us with a Review of a less intensive but highly valuable character.<sup>3</sup> Great Britain and America, afraid to take this particular plunge, still hesitate before launching out into the deep. With increase of faith and the pressure of a steadily growing need, their day of action must come before very long. But Italy, even amid the distractions and crises of the present war, boldly initiated her adventurous project. And what happened? Just what might have been anticipated. *Il Rinascimento* was allowed three years of life; this new *Rivista* was permitted to appear but twice! The issues for January-February and March-April were duly distributed among numerous and expectant subscribers, but then the threatening bolt suddenly fell. By a decree of the Holy Office, further publication was suspended on the ground that the Review was "an organ of modernistic propaganda." Repression of this sort has not infrequently been resorted to in the history of mankind; but it has never permanently dammed any stream of wholesome and vitalizing influence. This Review has not really been destroyed. Like many a spring whose waters have been forced to make their way beneath the surface, the subject-matter hitherto found in the pages of this journal must now seek vent through less conspicuous and deeper channels.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Rivista di scienza delle religioni*. Bimonthly. Rome, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Revue de l'histoire des religions*. Bimonthly. 76 (half-yearly) vols. Paris, 1880— (in progress).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*. Quarterly. 17 vols. Leipzig, 1898—

Another publication, more compact and less academic in type, has also already come to an untimely end.<sup>1</sup> All who possess its first volume will sincerely hope to see it revived when war exigencies shall have ceased. That such a journal should have been begun is of itself an encouraging and significant fact. For the period of a year it filled a vacant niche and showed itself fully competent to discharge an important task.

An older scientific journal, not so widely known in Great Britain and America as it ought to be, is "pubblicata a cura dei professori della Scuola Orientale nella R. Università di Roma."<sup>2</sup> Conducted in an excellent spirit and with an untiring industry, it has secured many valuable results in the extensive field of research to which it devotes itself. Yet it does not of course occupy the place which the recently suspended *Rivista* aspired to fill. It has other functions to discharge; it has responsibility for tasks which are more particularly its own. Its range is so wide that only occasionally does material relevant to the history of religions come within its purview. For the most part, it is constrained to deal with subjects which have no affiliation with the study just named.

There are several auxiliary topics to which, if they did not lie outside the scope of this survey, it would have been a genuine satisfaction to refer. And, concerning some of them, a great deal might usefully have been written. It must not be overlooked, for example, that modernism has always whole-heartedly favored the study of the history of religions. The reason of the serious opposition it has encountered in some quarters is indeed in this way partially explained. The coercion to which it has been persistently subjected in Italy has merely been hinted at; some readers of the *American Journal of Theology* might with advantage take a glance through one of Signor Murri's recent pamphlets.<sup>3</sup> Did the occasion permit, attention might also have been directed to many incidental discussions of highly important and directly relevant

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Bollettino di letteratura critico-religiosa* (Rome, 1914).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Rivista degli studi orientali*, Rome, 1907— (in progress).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Romolo Murri, *La religione nell' insegnamento pubblico in Italia* (Rome, 1915).

subjects.<sup>1</sup> But, for the purpose aimed at in a series of mere sketches, enough has already been said.

Summing up the gains of the last eight years, at least six notable achievements have been chronicled in the foregoing pages.

1. Two adequately established university chairs ("professori ordinari") having been secured—one for Rome and the other for Naples—these posts have once more been filled; and their occupants, though appointed to deal directly with other and more general themes, are unalterable friends and promoters of the study of the history of religions.

2. A professorship ("incaricato") has recently been founded in the University of Bologna and a lectureship ("libero docente") in the University of Rome for the express purpose of fostering the interests of this study.

3. A professorship devoted to the history of religions has recently been established under the auspices of the Royal Academy of Milan.

4. Members of the *facoltà di filosofia e lettere* in several universities—supported by many representative teachers in university institutes, etc.—are taking a steadily deepening interest in the fortunes of this department.

5. Scientific societies, congresses, etc., are beginning to exhibit a wholly unfamiliar inclination to explore this field diligently and with genuine devotion.

6. The printing press is now rendering fuller (and most welcome) service. In particular, a scientific journal of a most promising type having made its appearance in Rome, it is admitted that concrete expression has at last been given to a strong and very widely diffused demand. It is being affirmed, in truth, that a Review of this sort is today a *sine qua non* in Italy. Impediments, to be sure—impediments which were not wholly unforeseen—have led to the temporary suppression of this journal; but, among other liberalizing influences of the war, there is certain before long to be a reaction in its favor. A more generous reception of such enterprises in future is now practically assured. The tide of

<sup>1</sup> Cf., for example, Mario Puglisi, *Il problema morale nelle religioni primitive* (Rome, 1915).

enlightened sentiment is unmistakably rising, and that tide will yet submerge all ultra-conservative obstacles.

Many significant advances, concerning which Italy is content meanwhile to remain silent, are in confident prospect. While her brave soldiers are winning a wider political liberty amid the hardships and agonies of the battlefield, her scholars are on the eve of winning a no less decisive victory at home. Within the sphere of religious liberty, great changes are sure to come. And not least among these reforms will be the new scope accorded to the scientific study of the many faiths of mankind. In that metropolitan city and university wherein this study has had to fight so long and so hard for even the barest recognition, in a city and university wherein multiplied and hitherto insurmountable difficulties have effectually barred its progress, a new era in its evolution has been ushered in. Antiquated defenses and insecure citadels are being demolished one by one. Today an entirely new outlook greets the investigator who has entered into a once-forbidden domain. It has become indeed the widely diffused hope of many, both in Italy and beyond it, that Rome will yet possess in affiliation with its university a "scuola delle religioni" which will emulate the "section des sciences religieuses" of the famous École des Hautes-Études of Paris. Such an achievement may require more time than optimistic onlookers and local enthusiastic students are inclined to believe; but, though the vision tarry, it is now destined to take substantial and permanent form. When that day comes, none will applaud its advent more sincerely than Italy's countless well-wishers in America, in France, and in the British Isles.